

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study of the Riverside Auto Center uncovered several problems as outlined below.

A. Overall Problem - Competition

Over the last 10 years the Riverside Auto Center has come under competition from other southern California Auto Centers. Existing and planned centers within a 30 mile radius and in direct competition with Riverside are listed in Table 2 below:

Table 2 — Competing Auto Centers Within 30 Miles

<u>Center</u>	<u>Approximate Miles</u>
Corona	10
Norco	10
San Bernardino	13
Ontario	15
Moreno Valley	20
Montclair	25
Tustin	30
Claremont	30
Santa Ana	30

Even centers beyond 30 miles are likely to be in some competition. Examples of Auto Centers over 30 miles away which are also likely to be in competition with the Riverside Auto Center are listed in Table 3 below:

Table 3 — Competing Auto Center Over 30 Miles Away

<u>Center</u>	<u>Approximate Miles</u>
Pomona	32
Glendora	35
Buena Park	36
Irvine	38
La Mirada	40
Hemet	40
West Covina	43
Norwalk	43
Garden Grove	43
Cerritos	44
Signal Hill	48
Santa Fe Springs	48
Compton	50
Carlsbad	70
Escondido	70

These centers are believed to have eroded the sales potential of the Riverside Auto Center. Although a specific market study has not been completed this is the statement and perception of Riverside Auto Center dealers and it is apparently true.

Because the competing centers are newer, they are generally more attractive, have superior car display areas and better freeway exposure than the Riverside Auto Center. Although not documented, some of these centers would also appear to be more aggressive in joint advertising and marketing.

The Specific Plan focuses on the physical facilities in the Auto Center. Other efforts could focus on the advertising and marketing aspects of the problem.

B. Physical Facility Problems

1. Focus and Vehicle Display

The original Auto Center primarily focused displays along Auto Drive. This approach is similar to that used in an enclosed shopping mall where stores are concentrated and located to provide an interesting and continuous shopping experience.

Over the years some of the focus of the Riverside Auto Center has been lost. Dealers have expanded along Adams Street, Jefferson Street and Indiana Avenue. A variety of non-automobile display uses are interspersed within the

center. Additionally a number of car dealers, often with lower quality design standards have appeared along Indiana Avenue.

This lack of focus on quality dealership design has eroded the purpose and intent of the Center. The existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinance do not adequately control this problem.

2. Auto Center Identity and Exposure

Closely related to the lack of focus as explained above, is the lack of identity for the Center. For example:

- There are no entry statements, monuments, or signs that let the visitor know that they have in fact arrived at the Auto Center.
- The existing “Auto Center” sign is difficult to see from the freeway and is unattractive and ineffective.
- The parts of the Center most visible from the freeway are generally lower quality car sales businesses in converted residential structures or consist of remaining single family homes.
- Much of the Indiana frontage of the original Auto Center is a concrete block wall that hides the central part of the Center from Indiana Avenue traffic.
- There are few unifying elements such as street lights, dealer signs, landscape, or architecture that tie the center together.

3. Display Spaces

Many of the indoor and outdoor display spaces lack the appeal and attractiveness of new centers. Cars often immediately abut sidewalk areas with little landscaping or in some cases are actually parked on the sidewalks. New techniques using attractive paving or landscaping are often not used. Lighting fixtures are not uniform and in some cases result in glare or inadequate lighting of displayed vehicles.

4. One Stop Center

As a marketing tool, it could be useful to think of the Riverside Auto Center as a “one stop” center selling all makes of automobiles marketed in the southern California area. As of the writing of this study, 5 makes were not sold within the Riverside Auto Center.

5. Parking

Few dealers have attractive customer parking areas and parallel street parking can be awkward for some drivers. Additionally, due to apparent inadequate employee parking, some employees park in areas that should be reserved for customers.

6. Overall Aesthetics

The over-all aesthetics of the Center are of a lower standard than that found in many new centers. Problems include those listed above as well as:

- Lack of attractive landscape
- Lack of attractive uniform street lights
- Overhead power lines
- Pole signs
- Non-uniform signage
- Inconsistent lighting
- Unattractive paving materials